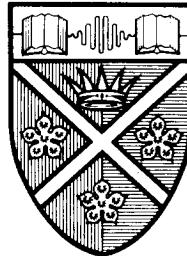


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THE RISE OF ISSUE VOTING IN BRITISH ELECTIONS

Mark N. Franklin

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Introduction

One of the best substantiated findings of recent voting studies is the decline in the power of social class to explain voting choice. Depending on whether it is measured traditionally in terms of occupation, or more loosely in terms of a wider set of social indicators, the ability of social class to structure partisanship declined by something between a quarter and a half in the period 1959 to 1970 (Rose, 1974; Crewe, Alt and Sarlvik, 1977; Franklin and Mughan, 1978). The measurement of class voting since 1970 has been bedeviled by contaminating influences, but once allowance is made for these, its extent appears to have stabilized at a lower level in more recent elections (Franklin, 1982). But if class has declined as a determinant of partisanship, what, if anything, has taken its place? Unless we can find a satisfactory answer to this question, we will be left in the unfortunate position of having to suspect that voting behaviour may have become less rather than more rational in recent years, with the electorate casting its vote increasingly on the basis of whim and impulse. Happily there is an obvious candidate for successor to class voting whose credentials should be investigated. It seems reasonable to hypothesise that the decline of class voting will have opened the way, at least to a limited extent, for a rise in issue voting to take place, and the purpose of the present paper is to investigate this hypothesis.

The possibility that the declining salience of social class within the British electorate has removed a constraint that used to hamper issue voting constitutes an attractive hypothesis, but there is at least one alternative possibility which would be a great deal more prosaic. This is that class voting is still with us, though in a different guise. This second hypothesis was suggested by Miller (1978) who has shown that the class composition of different constituencies, as measured by the proportion of employers and managers in each, has increased as a determinant of constituency election results even as individual class characteristics have declined as determinants of individual voting choice. In recognition of this trend, Miller suggests (p.281) that politics at the individual level may have become less about "people like me" and more about "people around here". If the social mix of each constituency is having an increasing effect on people's voting behaviour, then there is less opportunity for individual voting behaviour to be determined by individual class characteristics (p.283).

These two hypotheses are by no means incompatible. It is quite possible that increasing influences from social milieu have gone along with increasing importance of issues, in which case it will be necessary to attempt to determine whether one of these influences is merely a spurious concomitant of the other. In order to guard against this possibility, the present paper also investigates the impact of social milieu, as measured by the proportion of employers and managers in the

constituency in which each individual resides, on the voting behaviour of those individuals.

The Data

The data for this study come from four nationwide surveys of the British electorate, (excluding Northern Ireland) conducted following the General Elections of 1964, 1966, 1970 and February 1974. Data from subsequent surveys conducted after the elections of October 1974 and May 1979 were also analysed, but presentation of findings from these surveys would have added little to the argument presented here, while complicating its exposition. From each of these surveys, in addition to measures of party identification and voting choice, six variables were chosen as being representative of different social influences connected with the concept of class voting, and various variables representing the importance of issues. The nature of the issue variables is discussed in Section 3 below. The class variables are the same as those employed in previous studies and have been described in Franklin (1982, 1983). Briefly, each of the six serves as an indicator for the general direction of political influences that individuals can be expected to experience in relation to different features of their lives. During childhood they will have been influenced by the political atmosphere in the home, neighbourhood and school (indicated by parents' party, parents' class and their own education). During adulthood they will have been affected

by their neighbours at home and their colleagues at work (indicated by type of housing, occupation and union membership).

To the datasets established in this fashion, one variable was added from another source entirely. This measured the proportion of employers and managers among inhabitants of the constituency in which the respondent was resident at the time of the election concerned. For the elections of 1964 and 1966 this and other census variables had already been added to the survey data in the course of the Strathclyde Historical Elections Project (Miller, 1977). For the elections of 1970 and 1974 the variable was added to each dataset as part of the research conducted for the present study. (1)

In contrast to previous practice, two dependent variables were employed. One of these, voting choice, is the same as that used in the studies already referred to, derived from the "How did you vote" question in each of the surveys by dichotomizing supporters of the Labour party against the rest. (2) The other is a measure of party identification derived from the question "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as...?" Again this was dichotomized to distinguish supporters of the Labour party from others. This variable was included so that we could confront the problem of issue preference contamination by party identification (see section 3, below). In all analyses reported in this paper the universe under study excluded non-voters but included minor party voters

along with those who voted Conservative or Labour.

The Problem of Issue-Voting

The study of issue voting is complicated by a number of factors, some of which are discussed at length in Butler and Stokes (1974, pp. 277 ff). (3) In particular, it is not at all clear to what extent issue preferences are independent of party preferences. On the contrary, considerable evidence has been amassed over the years to support the proposition that issue preferences are mediated by party preference. The classic solution to this problem is that pioneered by V. O. Key Jr. in his study of the Responsible Electorate (Key, 1966) which is to look at the issue preferences of those members of the electorate who switched from support of one party to support of another since the time of the previous election. The rationale for this procedure, though never supported by hard evidence, is that "switchers" (as Key called them) are those least likely to have their issue preferences contaminated by longstanding party identification. We will employ this procedure ourselves in the next section in order to establish the rise of issue-voting in this context between 1964 and 1974. However, this solution does not permit the sort of multivariate analysis which is necessary in order to disambiguate the effects of issue preferences from those of class and social milieu. For the latter purpose we need to be able to build a causal model in which the effects of issue preferences are measured for the

whole electorate and not just those who switched parties.

The measurement of issue preferences is itself a vexed question. Butler and Stokes (1974, pp.290-5) suggest that there are three conditions which should be fulfilled before an issue can be expected to affect an electoral outcome. The first is that the issue should be salient, the second that it should be integrated into the party system, with one party opposing the other on the issue, and the third that opinions should be skewed such that one party gains an electoral advantage from the position it takes. Meier and Campbell (1979) add that the voters should correctly perceive the issue positions taken by each party. When we are concerned with the effects of issues on the voting choice of individuals, we can ignore the third requirement of skewedness, and the question of salience becomes one that has to be answered for each individual separately. The requirement of correct perception is perhaps a little strong. Certainly it would be desirable that issue voting were based on correct perception of party positions, but perceptions could influence voting decisions even though they were incorrect. For the purposes of the present paper, we ignore the problem of misperception of party stances, leaving this as an area in urgent need of further research.

With these simplifications we can construct an index measuring the extent of issue-based support for any political party by establishing, for each of a number of issues, the

extent to which each respondent considers it a salient issue, the position he takes on that issue, and the identity of the party (if any) which he views as taking the same position. Unfortunately, changes in questionnaire design over the years mean that we cannot establish these three things in precisely the same manner for each of the elections with which we are concerned. In 1966 and 1970 we have comparable variables in almost all respects: a multiple response item measuring issue importance, a set of questions measuring positions on specific issues, and a corresponding set measuring perceived party postures on the same issues. In 1964 we have everything in this list except the multiple-response items measuring issue importance. However, we do have the item in question measured for most of the 1964 sample in a previous wave of the same panel study, in 1963, and an independent check on the consistency of these items with 1964 feelings of issue importance in the case of certain issues.(4) In 1974 we have a rather different measure of salience, in that respondents were asked for each issue whether it was important to them or not, rather than, as in previous years, being asked simply to list important issues which might might or might not include those for which specific questions as to attitude and party postures would then be asked. Thus in 1974 more of the issues for which we have attitude and party posture data emerge as salient than in previous years, and there is a much greater degree of variation between different respondents on the number of respects in which they prefer their most preferred party. So the resulting indices of issue-based party preferences had to

be normalized on the basis of the number of issues each respondent considered salient.

Whether our indices of issue-based party support are in fact comparable from year to year is a question that cannot easily be resolved; but the fact that the measures are almost completely identical for the two elections 1966 and 1970 gives us some firm ground upon which we can build in considering whether our results for other elections are at least plausible.

The Rise of Issue-voting in British Elections

Viewed in a simple-minded fashion, in terms of either voting in accord with issue-based party preferences or switching in accord with issue-based party preferences, it is clear that issue voting increased between 1964 and 1974. If we start by taking the index of issue-based preference for the Labour party, and correlate this with Labour voting in 1964 and 1974, we find that the Pearsonian correlation increases from 0.418 in 1964 to 0.631 in 1974. The correlation of this index with Labour Party identification increased even more, from 0.403 to 0.684, so that by 1974 issue-based preference was explaining over 46 per cent of the variance in party identification.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Table 1 (a) Average index of issue-based preference for the Labour Party among switchers and non-switchers to Labour, 1959-1964 and 1970-1974.

	1959-1964	1970-1974
Voted Conservative in both elections	0.512 (N=579)	0.498 (N=603)
Voted Conservative in first election, Labour in second	0.592 (N=99)	0.719 (N=148)
Difference of Means*	0.080	0.221

Table 1(b) Average index of issue-based preference for the Conservative Party among switchers and non-switchers to Conservative, 1959-1964 and 1970-1974.^a

	1959-1974	1970-1974
Voted Labour in both elections	0.584 (N=487)	0.573 (N=861)
Voted Labour in first election, Conservative in second	0.354 (N=28)	0.135 (N=73)
Difference of Means*	0.230	0.438

a. This index is set to its own reciprocal in order to give positive values when predicting Labour voting choice (see below). Thus a value of 0.354 is more conservative in orientation than a value 0.584.

* Using a composite index of issue-based party preference embodying both of the indices employed in this table (see below) and decomposing the variance in this index across the categories of consistant and inconsistant voting in 1964 and 1974, switching explains 23.6 per cent of the variance in 1964. By 1974 the variance in the corresponding index explicable by vote switching since 1970 had more than doubled to 58.6 per cent.

Table 1(a) compares the average of issue-based preferences for the Labour Party on the part of those switching to a Labour vote with the average among those remaining committed to the Tory Party between 1959 and 1964, and between 1970 and 1974. It shows that the difference between switchers and non-switchers is much greater in the second of the two election pairs. Table 1(b) does the same for Conservative voters.

But these perspectives on issue voting are much too simple-minded to be of much use. In the first place, they totally ignore the question of whether issue-based preferences reflect rather than cause a prior decision on how to vote, and in the second place (rather more subtly) they ignore the fact that issue-based preferences may themselves be partial consequences of prior influences (for example, from early socialization or social status). Reference to American voting studies emphasizes the possible importance of these influences.

Towards a Model of Issue-Based Voting in British Elections

Goldberg (1966) proposed a model of class and issue voting which made issue preferences dependent in part on party identification which was in turn dependent on class and socializing influences, as illustrated in Figure 1. This model was proposed after previous analysis had rejected two alternative models which had posited, on the one hand, a funnelling of causation through issue preferences and, on the

other hand, its funnelling through party identification. The revised model gave a good fit to data on voting behaviour in the 1956 American election, except that a direct effect on attitudes was found to come from parents' social class, reflecting a continuing influence of early socialization in line with the second (and more subtle) problem mentioned above. The model attempts to overcome the first problem by separating out the vote decision from party identification and positing that the former is partially determined by political attitudes, which in turn are partially determined by party identification.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Applied to British voting data from the elections of 1964, 1966, 1970 and 1974 this model also does quite well, although in our case we find no significant influence from Parents' class to respondent's political attitudes. Instead we find small but sometimes statistically significant influences from respondent's social class both to respondent's attitudes, and also to his voting choice. These influences are at their greatest in the election of 1966, whose coefficients are those illustrated in Figure 2. The coefficients are partial beta weights derived from multiple regression analysis which treats each variable (except Parents' Social Class) as dependent in turn on all those variables prior in causal sequence. (5) Beta weights are used in preference to unstandardized regression

Figure 1 (Model 1) Goldberg's proposed model of voting behaviour in American Presidential elections, with an additional path discovered empirically (broken line) and coefficients for 1956.

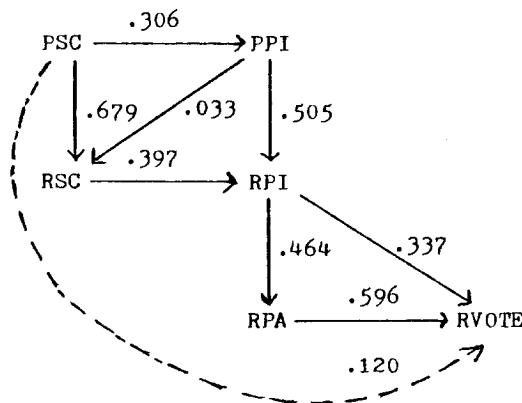


Table of symbols

PSC	Parents' Social Class
PPI	Parents' Party Identification
RSC	Respondent's Social Class
RPI	Respondent's Party Identification
RPA	Respondent's Political Attitudes
RVOTE	Respondent's Voting Choice

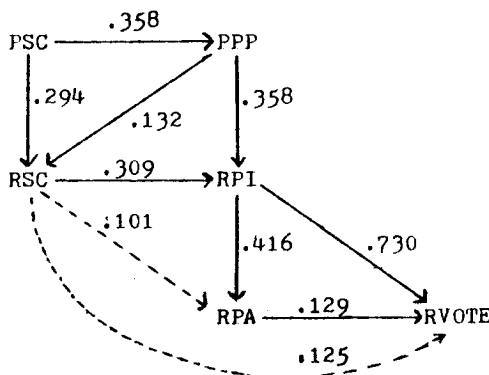
Source: Adapted from Model III in Goldberg (1966).

coefficients because two variables, Respondent's Political Attitudes and Respondents Social Characteristics, are additive indices whose range of values is not comparable with that of the other variables, all of which are dichotomies. (6) However, the interpretation of these coefficients remains much the same as that explained in Franklin and Mughan (1978) and their magnitudes remain comparable with those of the coefficients presented in the class voting models in (Franklin, 1983).

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

The illustration shows that the direct effects of Respondent's Political Attitudes on voting choice was 0.129, only some 13 per cent of the total effect on 1966 voting choice, most of which came from party identification; and this effect turns out to have been the highest of the decade. (7) Moreover, the coefficients on the paths leading in to Respondent's Political Attitudes indicate that this variable was itself largely determined by prior influences (.101 + .416 = 0.517). Thus any balanced view of the independent contribution of issue preferences to voting choice has to subtract transmitted influences of some seven per cent (the product of .101 x .129 plus the product of .101 x .129). (8) Table 2 summarizes the gross and net effects of issue-based party preferences on voting choice estimated on the basis of Model 2, for all years 1964 to 1974, and shows that on the

Figure 2 (Model 2) A tentative model of British voting behaviour, with additional paths discovered empirically (broken lines) and coefficients for 1966.



Symbols as in Model 1.

basis of this model, far from an increase in issue voting between 1964 and 1974, what we find is negligible issue voting at any time.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

But is Model 2 a plausible model of British voting behaviour? In the American context, the relatively small influence of Respondent's Party Identification on voting choice (0.337 in Model 1), together with the relatively large direct effect of attitudes (0.593) means that any reciprocal causation between attitudes and identification would only make a modest difference to the overall effect of attitudes on voting choice.⁽⁹⁾ But in the British context the reverse is the case, and even a modest effect of attitudes on party identification would make a very large relative difference to the apparent overall effect of attitudes.

That there is an effect from attitudes to partisanship has been shown in the American context by Meier and Campbell (1979) who use panel data (repeated reinterviews during a political campaign) to calculate reciprocal effects of voting choice on attitudes and of attitudes on voting choice. The Second of these effects was estimated at between 0.09 and 0.11, while the first was estimated consistently over three measurements at almost exactly three times this amount, between 0.26 and 0.33.

Table 2 Gross and net effects of political attitudes on voting choice estimated from Model 2 for 1964-74.

	Direct effect of RPA (a)	Effect of RSC on RPA (b)	Effect of RPI on RPA (c)	Total transmitted effects* (d)	Net effect of issues** (e)
1964	.086	.067	.412	.041	.045
1966	.129	.101	.416	.067	.062
1970	.128	.025	.405	.055	.073
1974	.061	.083	.451	.033	.028

* (Col a)(Col b) + (Col a)(Col c)

** Col a - col d

Symbols as in Model 1.

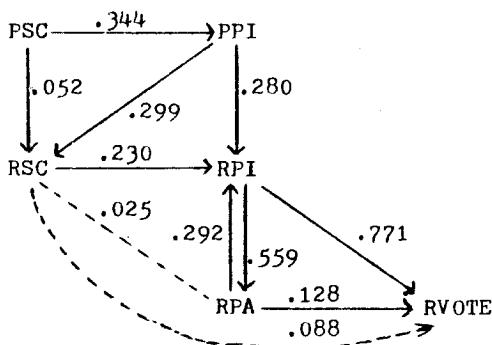
This is admittedly not quite the reciprocal relationship we would have wished to see calculated for our purposes, since we are interested in reciprocal causation between attitudes and party identification rather than between attitudes and voting choice. However, the result is at least suggestive of such a reciprocal relationship, and if we take advantage of the fact that any influence of Parents Party Identification on Respondent's Attitudes must (according to our model) arise indirectly through Respondents Social Class or Respondent's Party Identification, then it is possible to arrive at an algebraic result for the effect of Respondent's Party Identification on his attitudes and in the other direction. (10)

When we perform these calculations we do not initially find a consistent ratio between the two reciprocal causal paths, although the path from party identification to attitudes is always the greater of the two. Our next elaboration of the voting behaviour model will find such consistency (see below) at a ratio of two-to-one, so Model 3 is presented here with coefficients derived from the election of 1970, in which the two-to-one ratio between effects on attitudes and effects of attitudes came closest to being established.

MODEL 3 ABOUT HERE

The first thing to notice about this model is that, as

Model 3 A second tentative model of British voting behaviour
with reciprocal causation between Party Identification
and Political Attitudes, and coefficients for 1970.



Symbols as in Model 1.

suggested above, the indirect effects of even quite modest influences on party identification from political attitudes can be considerable. Table 3 estimates these effects, and then calculates the net effects of attitudes in the same manner as was done in Table 2. As can be seen, Model 3 produces net attitude effects that are quite respectable, and even show a modest rate of increase over the decade. But differences

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

between the nature of American politics in 1956 and British politics in the 1970s suggests that even this model may be defective in at least one important respect. A single measure of political attitudes does not allow for the fact that disenchantment with the potential of one political party may not be matched by enchantment with the potential of the other. Respondents may have issue-based preferences for both political parties at the same time, or for neither. In particular the latter possibility would appear to be one for which we should make allowance, when respondents have the option of voting for a minor party or not voting at all.

With these conditions in mind, Model 4 differs from Model 3 in providing two measures of issue-based party preference rather than one. In this model, Respondent's Political Attitudes have been recast as two variables, Respondent

Table 3 Gross and net effects of political attitudes on voting choice, both direct and indirect, estimated from Model 3 for 1964 - 1974.

	Direct effect of RPA (a)	Indirect effect via RPI (b)	Total effect of RPA (c)	Total effects transmitted by RPA* (d)	Net effect of issues** (e)
1964	.086	.219	.305	.055	.250
1966	.129	.215	.344	.087	.257
1970	.128	.225	.353	.081	.272
1974	.061	.267	.328	.049	.279

* Sum of paths (RSC,RPA,RVOTE)+(RPI,RPA,RVOTE)+(RSC,RPA,RPI,RVOTE).

** Col c - Col d.

Symbols as in Model 1.

Pro-Labour and Respondent Pro-Conservative, and the layout of the model has been somewhat re-arranged in order to accommodate the extra linkages. The model does not perform much better

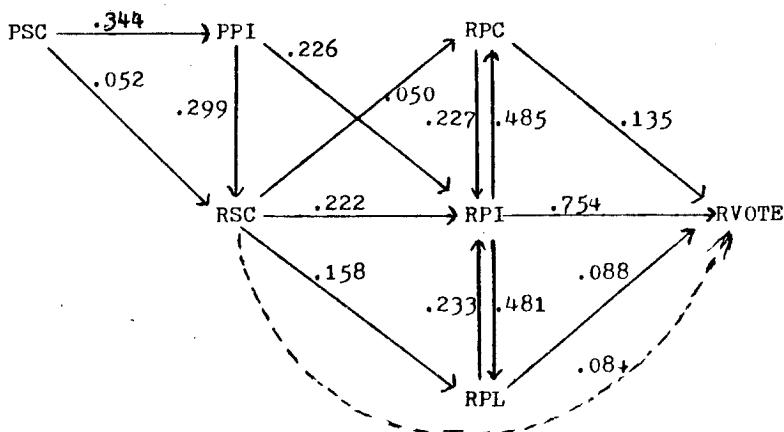
MODEL 4 ABOUT HERE

than Model 3 in terms of explaining variance in voting choice. Largely because of the powerful effect of party identification, both models explain some 76 percent of the variance in 1970, with the more complex model explaining an additional half of one percentage point. However, the additional paths provided for the indirect effects of issue-based preferences can make a lot of difference to the apparent impact of these attitude variables, and do so especially in 1970 and 1974, as can be seen in Table 4 which provides the same information as did Table 3, but for the more elaborate Model 4.

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

In this table for the first time we see a progressive increase in the total effect of issues, by five per cent or more per general election, from a low of 0.389 in 1964 to a high of 0.556 in 1974. However, the proportion of this total effect which is attributable to class and party identification also varies from year to year, in such a way as to give a

Model 4 A proposed model of British voting behaviour with reciprocal causation and dual attitude measurement, and with coefficients for 1970.



Symbols as in Model 1, plus

RPC Respondent Pro-Conservative

RPL Respondent Pro-Labour

Table 4 Gross and net effects of Political attitudes on voting choice, both direct and indirect, estimated from Model 4 for 1964 - 1974.

	Direct effect of RPC+RPL (a)	Indirect effects via RPI (b)	Total effect of RPC+RPL (c)	Total transmitted by RPC,RPL (d)	Net effect of issues (e)
1964	.111	.278	.389	.134	.256
1966	.170	.271	.441	.167	.274
1970	.220	.341	.512	.162	.350
1974	.130	.426	.556	.215	.341

Symbols are as in Model 4.

maximum net effect of issues in 1970 rather than in 1974.

Class constraints on issue voting

Whatever one may feel about the propriety of algebraic manipulation of regression coefficients in order to untangle the problem of reciprocal causation between political attitudes and party identification, it is virtually certain that some reciprocal causation does take place. In Model 4 we find this to be very consistent from election to election, with party identification having about twice the impact on issue-based party preference than the latter has on party identification. Even if we are for some reason overestimating the effect of issues on party identification, it is implausible that this effect should be less than half what we have estimated, in which case, feeding through the indirect paths in Model 4 and adding the direct effects of issues will still give us a low of 0.250 and high of 0.391 in total effect of issues before deduction of (much reduced) transmitted effects. At any level of indirect effects, the general pattern observed in Table 4 seems likely to hold good because it is dominated by the direct effects of issue-based preferences, which rise to a peak in the election of 1970 and then fall off four years later.

The fact that this pattern of rise and fall in the direct effects of issue voting is almost precisely the reciprocal of the pattern of fall and rise in the uncorrected effects of

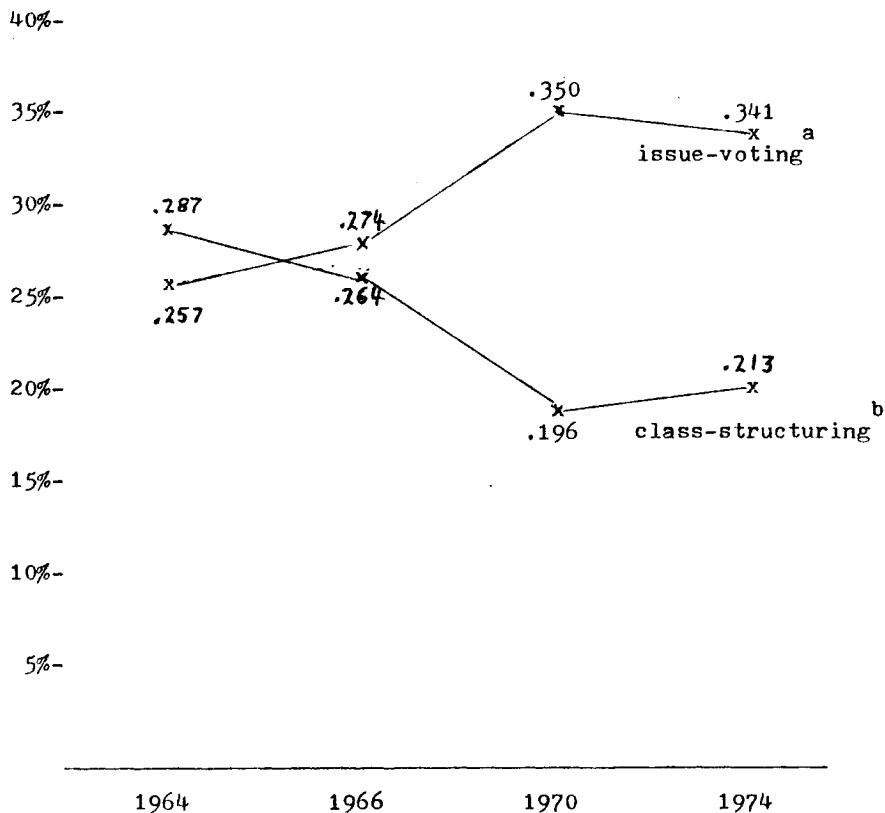
class voting (Franklin, 1982) is suggestive of a possible relationship between issue-based voting choice and class-structured voting, where the level of one is constrained by the level of the other, so that when class voting is high issue voting is necessarily low, and the reverse is also true. A possible mechanism for such a relationship can be found in all our models, in the changing relationship between class and political attitudes. As illustrated in column (b) of Table 2, this drops to a minimum in 1970, at which election political attitudes were least constrained by social class. Thus when class-based structuring of voting choice is high, so too is class-based structuring of political attitudes, but as class-based structuring falls, so political attitudes can come to have an increasingly independent effect on voting choice.

What is harder to rationalize is the close degree of correspondence between changes in the net effect of issues, in the last column of Table 4, and the residual effect of class-structuring when political and demographic influences are controlled, in Figure 10 of Franklin (1982).

FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE

Figure 5 illustrates this correspondence, which cannot be entirely explained on the same basis as the correspondence between the uncontrolled relationships mentioned above. This

Figure 5 Correspondence between change in net effects of issues from Model 4 with changes in class-structuring of voting choice from other research.



a. From Table 4.

b. From Franklin (1982)

Table 10.

is because both the trends depicted in Figure 5 are highly corrected for contaminating influences, and these contaminants are quite different in each case. If we knew that there should be an inverse relationship between issue voting and class-based voting, then the reciprocal relationship illustrated in Figure 5 would serve to validate both of the decontamination procedures employed. As things stand, all we can say is that it is highly unlikely that the degree of correspondence seen in Figure 5 would have arisen by chance, so that the correspondence adds verisimilitude to the decontamination procedures we have employed, and also suggests that class voting and issue voting are indeed inversely related.

Social milieu and issue voting

The apparent inverse relationship between class voting and issue voting may not be quite what it seems. As pointed out in Section 1 above, it is possible that class voting has not declined so much as been replaced by another form of class influence: the influence of social milieu. If, as Miller (1978) has suggested, politics has become increasingly about "people around here" then the increasing apparent effect of issues could simply reflect the dominant issue preferences of "people around here." In order to be able to evaluate this hypothesis, our survey data was supplemented with census data from the 1966 and 1971 censuses, as described in Section 2 above. Specifically, a single variable measuring the

percentage of employers and managers in each constituency within which sampling took place was duplicated onto the cases of each respondent residing in that constituency. Given the spectacular relationship found by Miller between this variable and constituency election results, it would be surprising if there were no relationship at the individual level between voting choice and constituency class mix. In fact there is such a relationship, with a correlation in the range 0.261 to 0.274 over the decade. However, this relationship was at its highest not in 1974 but in 1966, and more importantly changed little with the passage of time. Moreover, the necessary relationship between social milieu and issue-based party preference was low (in the range 0.139 to 0.163) and reached its lowest ebb in 1974. (11) The only clue discernible in the individual-level data as to why the milieu effect should have increased its capacity to predict constituency election results comes in the relationship between social milieu and social class. Within our sample, a certain amount of shuffling of class and constituency residency patterns must have taken place over the decade, since a correlation between individual class characteristics and constituency class characteristics which dropped from 0.209 in 1964 to 0.159 in 1966 had, by 1974, risen to 0.309. This change in relationship, suitably magnified in an ecological analysis, (12) could be the only individual-level concomitant of the constituency-level changes observed by Miller.

At all events, the increase in issue-based voting choice

which, in our data, mirrors the decline in class-based voting choice, seems not to be a spurious concomitant of a rising effect of social milieu. On the contrary, the evidence strongly suggests that the decline of class voting in Britain has permitted a more or less equivalent rise in issue-based voting choice.

Conclusions

It would be comforting to be able to conclude that British voting behaviour had become more rather than less rational over the decade from 1964 to 1974, as issue voting rose to fill the vacuum left by a decline in the class-structuring of voting choice, but while the evidence we have presented in this paper is consistent with such a conclusion, it does not lead inevitably to it. We have established conditions necessary for an increase in rational voting behaviour, but not sufficient for such an increase.

Our less than definitive findings arise from four deficiencies in our analysis. In the first place, algebraic manipulation of causal paths is not an altogether satisfactory means of resolving problems in reciprocal causation. (13) We have tried to show that within a wide margin, any reasonable degree of reciprocal causation between issue-based party preferences and party identification would yield results comparable to those we have established in this paper.

However, we cannot rule out the possibility of a truly pathological combination of relationships producing quite unexpected transmittances for the indirect effects of political attitudes. In the second place, we have not even addressed the question of whether there might be reciprocal causation involved in the relationships between party identification and voting choice, and between political attitudes and voting choice. Any such reciprocity would attenuate the effects of political attitudes which we have measured, though they would be unlikely to change the direction of the trends we established unless they were so strong as to completely remove the effects of issues. This possibility is unlikely, but has not been ruled out in our analysis. Thirdly, our measure of issue-based party choice is not necessarily, as we pointed out in Section 3 above, at all connected with rationality. Individuals may think a party best by reason of its supposed commitment to some position which is in reality diametrically opposed to the actual commitment of that party. If such misperceptions are at all widespread, the rise of issue voting, if it has indeed taken place, might not represent any improvement in electoral rationality. Finally, we were concerned as to the comparability of our measures of issue-based party preference in 1964 and 1974. However, the major change we detect occurred between two elections (1966 and 1970) for which problems of comparability do not arise, and the fit between this finding and previous research (Franklin, 1982) adds plausibility to a supposition that comparability problems have not affected any of the findings reported here.

These are all matters that will have to be left for further research. What we have established in this paper is that different models of issue voting give rise to different implications for the extent and direction of change in issue voting. The model that we consider most plausible shows issue voting to have increased in step with the decline of class voting, and for reasons that are quite apparent in the three-variable case, though less so in the multivariate situation. Moreover, the rise in apparent incidence of issue voting does not appear to be a spurious concomitant of geographic influences on individual behaviour in the shape of Miller's (1978) *milieu* effect.

These findings, in conjunction with those about the nature of the decline in class voting set out in (Franklin, 1983), have important implications for the future of British politics. For if the decline in the structuring properties of central class variables outlined in that other paper (pp. 16 ff.) had not been accompanied by any increase in the ability of issue-based party preferences to structure partisanship, then the increasingly unsupported edifice of British two-party voting would have stood at the mercy of whim and chance. But if the findings of this paper are not put in question by the various deficiencies outlined above, then the British electorate is capable of being persuaded by rational argument into support for a quite new party structure. It is rare for academic research in political science to come up with findings helpful to practicing politicians, but those who are seeking to

change the basis of the British party system can take encouragement if nothing more from the findings of these papers.

FOOTNOTES

(1) The lengthy and intricate procedure of matching up constituency identification numbers, specifying the correspondences, sorting and weighting the correspondence lists and then merging two datasets on the basis of the matched identification numbers was performed by Ann Mair of the University of Strathclyde Social Statistics Laboratory, for whose patient assistance I am greatly indebted.

(2) For the rationale of this procedure, see Franklin (1982).

(3) The problem of issue voting has been widely discussed in the American literature on voting behaviour. A good bibliography is to be found in Margolis (1977).

(4) In both 1961 and 1966, separate questions were asked about strength of respondent feeling about immigration, and about the seriousness of strikes. On the multiple response item about issue importance both these issues come up again. Thus it is possible to compare salience consistency in 1966 over these two issues with salience consistency between 1963 and 1961 over the same two issues, as is done in the table below, which gives the per cent of those mentioning the issue as important who also thought it serious (for strikes) or had strong feelings (for immigration).

	1966 consistency	1963-4 consistency
Immigration (strong feelings)	76.0%	76.3%
Strikes (considered serious)	81.9%	91.1%

In both cases, consistent responses to the two questions were in fact more apparent between the 1963 and 1964 waves than within the 1966 wave of the panel study. If this degree of consistency is representative of what would have been found for other issues in the 1964 questionnaire, then we would have no qualms about using 1963 measures of issue importance in conjunction with other variables from 1974.

(5) All the analyses for this paper were performed using BGSS, the SPSS Conversational Statistical System (Nie, Hull, Franklin et al., 1980).

(6) For a description of the manner in which these dichotomous variables were created see Franklin and Mughan (1978) and Franklin (1982). A defence of the use of such variables in analyses of this kind can be found in Franklin and Mughan (1980). The additive index Respondent's Social Class was derived from the three dichotomies for Respondent's occupation, home ownership and union membership. For each respondent, the value of RSC is the best prediction of Labour voting choice that can be made from these three variables. This is identical to the procedure employed by Goldberg in deriving his corresponding index (Goldberg, 1966). The Respondent's Political Attitudes variables were

derived in the same manner from the two indices of issue-based preferences for Conservative and Labour which were discussed in Section 3 above.

- (7) The comparable coefficients are 0.086 for 1964, 0.120 for 1970 and 0.061 for 1974.
- (8) For a description of the manner in which indirect effects can be manipulated and interpreted see Franklin and Mughan (1978) and Franklin (1983).
- (9) For example, if we assume an effect of attitudes on identification of one third the magnitude of the effect in the other direction (see below), then the increment given to the overall effect of attitudes would only be $0.047 = (.337) \times (.464/3)$. If we assume the ratio to be two to one rather than three to one, then the increment comes out at .078.
- (10) Simple-mindedly, this can be done by saying that the effect of PPI on RPA controlling for RSC (which is calculable from the data) must be the product of the effect of PPI on RPI controlling for RSC (calculable) and that of RPI on RPA controlling for RCS (unknown). Having computed one of the unknowns in this fashion the other could be derived by algebraic manipulation. A more accurate procedure is to generalize the method by multiplying through all the determinants of RPI and RPA by their correlations with the "instrumental" variable PPI in the manner described by Stokes (1971).
- (11) Various multivariate models were evaluated in case the bivariate pattern of relationships had been biased by other changes in our data, but none of these analyses produced anything other than a reduction of milieu influences on voting choice in 1974.
- (12) Cf. Franklin (1983) Note 16, and Stokes (1969).
- (13) At the very least, our finding should be checked by the use of the methods such as those employed by Meier and Campbell (1979).

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